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Command and Staff College  
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2076 South Street

Marine Corps Combat Development Command  
Quantico, Virginia 22134-5068

MASTER OF MILITARY STUDIES

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**TITLE: Every Airman a Fighter**

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF  
THE REQUIREMENT FOR THE DEGREE OF  
MASTER OF MILITARY STUDIES

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AY 07-08

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Date: 17 March 08

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Date: 17 MAR 08

Report Documentation Page				Form Approved OMB No. 0704-0188	
Public reporting burden for the collection of information is estimated to average 1 hour per response, including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden, to Washington Headquarters Services, Directorate for Information Operations and Reports, 1215 Jefferson Davis Highway, Suite 1204, Arlington VA 22202-4302. Respondents should be aware that notwithstanding any other provision of law, no person shall be subject to a penalty for failing to comply with a collection of information if it does not display a currently valid OMB control number.					
1. REPORT DATE <b>2008</b>		2. REPORT TYPE		3. DATES COVERED <b>00-00-2008 to 00-00-2008</b>	
4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE <b>Every Airman a Fighter</b>				5a. CONTRACT NUMBER	
				5b. GRANT NUMBER	
				5c. PROGRAM ELEMENT NUMBER	
6. AUTHOR(S)				5d. PROJECT NUMBER	
				5e. TASK NUMBER	
				5f. WORK UNIT NUMBER	
7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) <b>United States Marine Corps, Marine Corps Combat Development Command, Command and Staff College, Marine Corps University, 2076 South Street, Quantico, VA, 22134-5068</b>				8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER	
9. SPONSORING/MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)				10. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S ACRONYM(S)	
				11. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S REPORT NUMBER(S)	
12. DISTRIBUTION/AVAILABILITY STATEMENT <b>Approved for public release; distribution unlimited</b>					
13. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES					
14. ABSTRACT					
15. SUBJECT TERMS					
16. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF:			17. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT <b>Same as Report (SAR)</b>	18. NUMBER OF PAGES <b>29</b>	19a. NAME OF RESPONSIBLE PERSON
a. REPORT <b>unclassified</b>	b. ABSTRACT <b>unclassified</b>	c. THIS PAGE <b>unclassified</b>			

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

**Title:** Every Airman a Fighter

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**Thesis:** The Air Force would benefit from incorporating the Marine Corps Martial Arts Program into its culture.

**Discussion:** The Air Force is currently trying to instill a warrior ethos across all specialty codes and reflects attitudes found in our sister services. More Airmen than ever are being asked to perform ground combat missions normally reserved for Soldiers and Marines, forcing them to complete just-in-time training with the Army prior to going to war. The Chief of Staff of the Air Force made changes to basic training and to the service physical fitness test to reflect a more martial culture. These changes may be too superficial. Since they are stand-alone changes that are not tied into a larger, sustained reinforcing ethos they may not produce the desired effect. Adopting a system of martial culture, like the Marine Corps Martial Arts Program, will carry the spirit intended by the Chief of Staff from indoctrination to retirement.

**Conclusion:** The Air Force lacks a vehicle to instill combat focus and capability in all Airmen. A program that emphasizes physical fitness, mental acuity and moral discipline is needed. For little cost the Air Force can adapt the Marine Corps Martial Arts Program to their benefit.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

DISCLAIMER.....	ii
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY.....	iii
PREFACE.....	v
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	vi
<u>Introduction.....</u>	<u>1</u>
<u>Marine Corps Martial Arts Program.....</u>	<u>2</u>
<u>Everything Old is New Again.....</u>	<u>4</u>
<u>Is it Relevant.....</u>	<u>7</u>
<u>Views of Chief of Staff of the Air Force.....</u>	<u>8</u>
<u>Air Force Physical Fitness.....</u>	<u>10</u>
<u>Physical Confidence and Use of Force.....</u>	<u>12</u>
<u>Reinventing the Wheel.....</u>	<u>15</u>
<u>Conclusion.....</u>	<u>16</u>
<u>ENDNOTES.....</u>	<u>19</u>
<u>BIBLIOGRAPHY.....</u>	<u>21</u>

## **PREFACE**

The United States Air Force has been at war for the last 17 years (1991-Present). Every year since 1991 we have dropped bombs, fired howitzers and shot small arms at our country's enemies. The Air Force's combat force going into harm's way from 1947-1991 primarily consisted of only pilots and aircrew. Since then the combat force is their youngest Airmen on the ground while the pilots and aircrew operate in relative anonymous safety (73 percent of Operation IRAQI FREEDOM and 81 percent of Operation ENDURING FREEDOM deaths were enlisted ground personnel). The challenge to today's Air Force leaders is how to initiate and sustain a warrior spirit along with a warrior capability into those we never believed would be put on the forward edge of battle. The Air Force has an opportunity to borrow a successful chapter from its own past and their Marine Corps brothers' present and develop an Air Force martial combat capability combined with esprit-de-corps.

## **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

I would like to acknowledge Dr. Pauletta Otis for providing the much needed “mentorship” this knuckle-dragger needed to finish this project. Major Joseph Farley of the Marine Corps was essential in explaining the USMC Martial Arts Program as well as certifying me through the first level (Tan Belt). Without the instruction of Mr. Rick Brewer and Mr. Jim Hartman I could not have appreciated what hand to hand combat training offers for physical and mental/moral discipline. These two gentlemen were the catalysts that began my training in martial arts over 22 years ago, and they are the role models for why I continue. The true hero behind the man, of course, is the woman that willingly bears his shield and fires his motivation. For me, that is my wife, Jennifer. Thank you all.

**I. Introduction.** The National Security Act of 1947 created the United States Air Force as a separate and distinct military service. The Air Force provides unique combat power through global domination of the air and space mediums. In the last 60 years they have been able to provide air superiority in every U.S. conflict.

The nature of combat for the Air Force has changed. For the first time in Air Force history the personnel they are putting in harm's way are not the aircrews they have trained for air combat, but the support personnel they have not specifically trained for ground combat. Fifty-one percent of all Air Force Security Forces missions are in lieu of Army units that are unable to complete them. From 1947 to 1991 it was relatively small numbers of highly trained officers and aircrew that represented the combat arm of the Air Force. On the modern battlefield it is large numbers of enlisted security forces, transportation drivers, engineers, explosive ordnance disposal, and intelligence specialists who conduct the battles of the Air Force. These same Airmen provide the only defense for Air Force aircraft when they are grounded.

A Rand study conducted in 1995 documented the fact that the greatest loss of U.S. aircraft due to enemy activity was because of ground-based stand-off attacks within six miles of the runway.<sup>1</sup> Yet, the billions of dollars spent over the last 12 years in aircraft protection has been for airborne threats and not ground based capability. For 60 years the Air Force has created a highly technological force of specialties that never expected to engage in ground combat.

In 2008 the Air Force needs to maintain that elite technological edge but sharpen it with a force that has the physical, moral and mental ability to close with the enemy on a personal level. The Air Force needs to instill a combat mentality that goes beyond creeds and can be demonstrated with physical ability. The benefits include better preparation of the Airmen for the



modern battlefield, better protection of our increasingly small numbers of expensive aircraft, fewer discipline issues, greater individual physical fitness, and higher esprit-de-corps.

It is the thesis of this paper that the Air Force should adapt the Marine Corps Martial Arts Program to bring a basic level of combat ability and wartime mentality to the Air Force.

**II. Marine Corps Martial Arts Program.** In 1999 the Commandant of the Marine Corps, General James Jones, initiated the Marine Corps Martial Arts Program. His vision was to create a force renowned for its prowess in close quarter combat, warrior ethos and fully capable to operate in expeditionary, small war environments.<sup>2</sup> Nine years later the Marines had a very mature program that has influenced the entire Marine Corps.

Leadership involvement was demonstrated in March of 2007 when the current Commandant, General Jams Conway, released an official message that directed all personnel to complete training for a tan belt by the end of the calendar year.<sup>3</sup> All Marines must complete gray belt training by 2008 and infantryman must complete the more difficult green belt training. The Commandant explained the benefit of the program to commanders when he stated the following:

“The character discipline is the bedrock of the MCMA. It has, at its center, the Marine Corps ethos that includes our core values of honor, courage, and commitment, as well as the legacy of selfless and honorable service passed from one generation of Marines to the next. MCMA utilizes discussions to sustain the transformation that begins in boot camp and continues throughout a Marine’s life. Without emphasis on character development and sustainment, MCMA becomes just another martial arts-based fighting method. With it, the program helps sustain our corps ethos and sets the condition for sustaining our legacy.”<sup>4</sup>

The martial arts program borrows from the traditional eastern arts by implementing a six-tier ranking system in order of proficiency; tan at the lowest then gray, green, brown and black. There are an additional three belt rankings that designate instructors and their levels. At each stage it is progressively harder to obtain the next rank and it can not be achieved quickly or

without physical sacrifice. It is also an accomplishment that an individual Marine can advance or let languish at their own personal choice; giving the Marine an even greater sense of accomplishment at earning a new rank. Beyond the leadership focus and the ranking system the program has three key components, physical discipline; mental discipline; and character discipline.

Physical discipline is composed of two combat elements, the martial techniques and the martial conditioning.<sup>5</sup> The martial techniques are to enable the Marines to fight in both armed and unarmed combat and apply the proper escalation of force. The martial conditioning is to harden the Marines so they can excel in traditional fitness training, combat water-survival training and rough-terrain skills training.<sup>6</sup> This outdoor, in-the-elements, training approach builds confidence and ability in the Marines that they can fight in any physical environment. Systems that train in climate controlled gyms on foam mats can not recreate the realism of fighting outdoors on uneven ground. The training is several times a week. Gichin Funakoshi, a Japanese Karate instructor, remarked that combatives training, “..was like boiling water: without heat it returns to its tepid state.”<sup>7</sup> The implication is that without constant practice, any skills that are developed may be lost. The physical conditioning lays the foundation for the mental toughening needed to fight in close quarters combat.

Mental discipline is the rigor of life-long learning for the Marine. The martial arts program requires study of the art of war; participation in the professional reading program; commons skills training; historical studies on war; understanding friendly/enemy tactics, techniques and procedures; risk management assessment; force protection; and study of Marine Corps history.<sup>8</sup> The goal is to develop the ability of the Marines to analyze a situation based on experience and historical context in order to do the right thing, the right way at the right time for

the right reasons. This structured development fills the gaps between basic training and formal professional military education schools. It continues to shape the individual Marines mental and moral maturity, often with their eager cooperation.

Character discipline is the bedrock of the martial arts program. The program uses study of ethics and Marine traditions to develop the linkages to honorable, professional and disciplined service. Character discipline is aimed at giving up values that may have gotten some Marines through a gang environment but are not compatible with being a Marine. The Marine sees by example and study, that the core values of honor, courage and commitment are more important. They also study customs, courtesies, citizenship and appreciate what personal and family obligation means. The end product is a young man or woman that has a sense of place, maturity, self-discipline and has a responsibility to the larger community and the mission of the Marine Corps.<sup>9</sup>

**III. Everything old is new again.** Hard physical training and combat martial arts are not new to the Air Force. In fact, in the infancy of the Air Force it had the most structured program in the history of the multiple services. The fifth Chief of Staff, General Curtis LeMay believed that at any time during war, his aircrews might have to bail out over enemy territory where they would encounter an attacker on the ground.<sup>10</sup> General LeMay also believed that with physical conditioning and training in hand-to-hand combat every muscle of the individual's body could be conditioned, making it easier to meet the physical demands of flying.<sup>11</sup> He required Airmen assigned to Japan to learn Judo and in 1952 had a team of martial artists visit each of the Air Force bases under his command. Experts in Aikido, Judo, and Karate demonstrated their arts to the Airmen. Many of these instructors returned to the U.S. starting the first martial arts schools in the United States. LeMay had each base establish a mandatory training program

three times a week that included vigorous physical conditioning and combatives lessons. He sent Airmen to Tokyo, Japan for instructor level training in Judo and upon their return, they formed classes and competition teams at each base in Strategic Command.

Air Force Judo teams won national titles throughout the 1950s and 1960s. In 1958, the Air Force represented the U.S. at the Judo World Championships held in Tokyo, Japan and finished fifth.<sup>12</sup> Many of the Judo schools in the U.S. today were started by former Airmen trained in General LeMay's combatives program. Unfortunately for today's Airmen, General LeMay's concern for ground combat preparedness did not survive the Vietnam war in the Air Force's training regimen. With the onset of the Vietnam conflict, this training was sacrificed in order to shorten the timeline and requirements of aircrew certification.

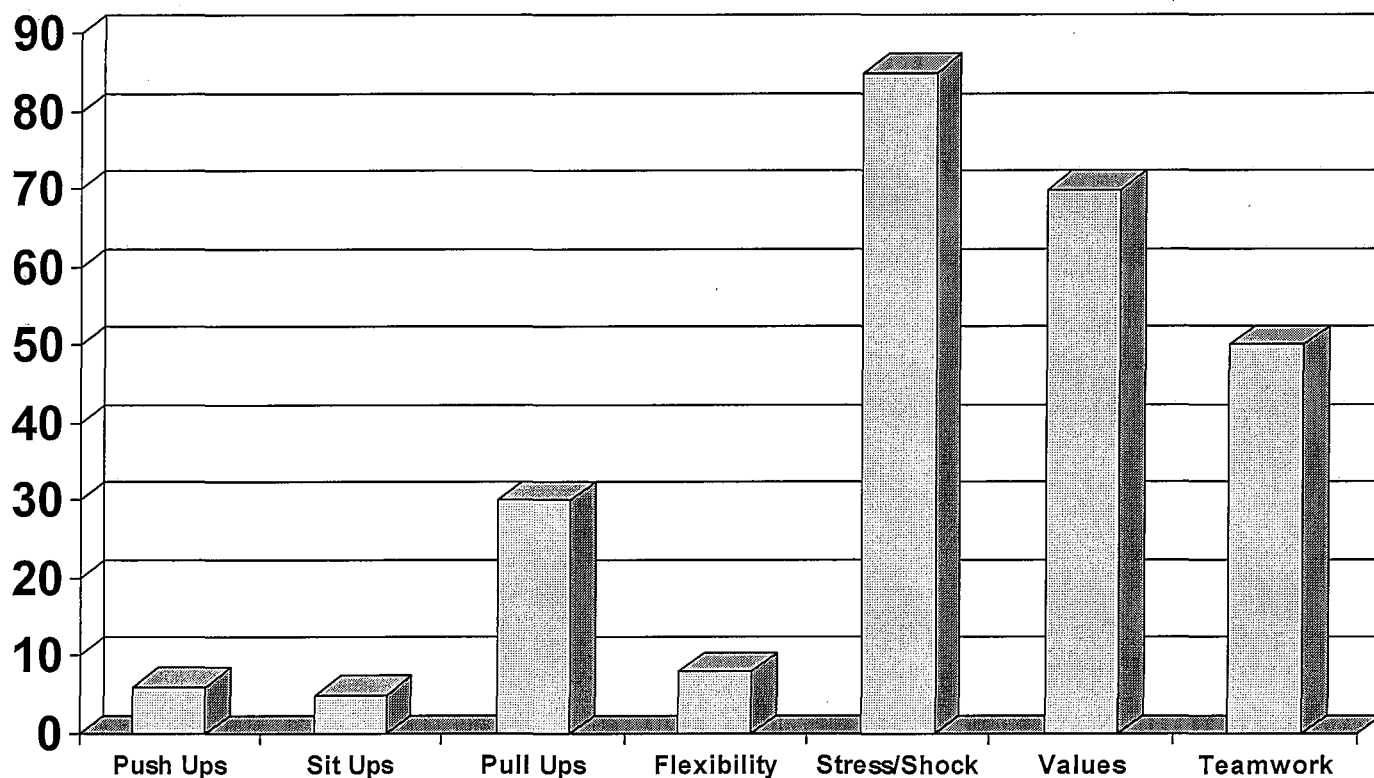
General LeMay was shown to be prophetic in his concern about Airmen in close ground combat, when Lieutenant Lance P. Sijan was forced to bail out over Laos on 9 November, 1967. Lieutenant Sijan broke his leg and his arm during his ejection. Unable to stand, he evaded the enemy by crawling through the jungle, avoiding capture for the next 46 days. This took incredible physical endurance and mental discipline. He was captured and thought to be too injured and weak to survive. Left with only one armed guard, the weakened and near death Lieutenant summoned this enemy closer. After the guard got within arms reach, Lieutenant Sijan knocked the guard out with a Karate-strike with his good arm and escaped by crawling away into the jungle. He was soon captured again and died two weeks later of pneumonia in the infamous Hanoi Hilton prison camp. For his actions he was the first Air Force Academy graduate to receive the Medal of Honor.<sup>13</sup> Lieutenant Sijan had the intense physical training and knowledge of martial arts that allowed him to survive with two broken limbs in the jungles of Vietnam and overcome a physically stronger and better equipped enemy. His story inspired the

other prisoners in Hanoi as well as the generations of Airmen that followed. That legacy would have been much different if Lieutenant Sijan had not been trained how to conduct that basic Karate strike or how to endure the great physical obstacles presented him in the jungle.

The United States Army also experimented with the concept of a martial arts training program in the mid 1980's. The officers who developed this program were hoping to reconnect the military with the traditional warrior virtues of service, courage, selflessness, loyalty and commitment.<sup>14</sup> The Army leaders were motivated by experiences in Vietnam where they had seen complex technology and weaponry beaten by an enemy that relied on small unit tactics, simplicity and heart.<sup>15</sup>

In 1985 two Army Green Beret teams were used as the subjects and conducted daily training in Aikido, meditation training and some biofeedback work. After six months of training they were determined to be more physically fit than when they started.<sup>16</sup>

**CHART 2**  
**1985 Army Physical Fitness Evaluation of 6 Month Martial Art Study**  
**Total Percentage Improvement by Major Category**



Push-up scores increased by six percent; sit-ups by five percent; pull-ups by 30 percent; stretching by eight percent; and their two mile run times decreased by 32 seconds on average. Some of the soldiers in the program were able to complete 90-120 pushups in the allotted two minutes. Testing further quantified that they had an 85 percent improvement in managing stress and shock, 70 percent improvement in understanding and applying key values, and a 50 percent increase in team cohesion.<sup>17</sup> The relatively small improvements in push-ups, sit-ups and flexibility can be rationalized as an adaptive cross-training benefit. But the incredible gains in dealing with stress, applying core values and establishing team cohesion are remarkable if not unexpected from a physical fitness program.

The United States military is not the only country to employ martial arts programs. China has developed programs throughout documented history. One of the early Generals in China, Qi Jiguang said in 1553 that, "...while not offering direct relevance to great warfare, unarmed combat training can benefit soldiers by developing strength and coordination."<sup>18</sup> The same general also believed that during a battle that the average soldier's mental capabilities "blanked out" and he was only able to use 20 percent of the skills he learned. He drew the conclusion that if soldiers could be subjected to repeated drills they might operate at 50 percent of their learned skills and therefore be invincible on the battlefield. This theme of the benefits of repeated drill and training development is still seen in the Chinese, Japanese and the United States Marine Corps' programs.<sup>19</sup>

**IV. Is it relevant?** The easy dispute for needing combatives training in the modern military is its relevance. Bombs are dropped from 30,000 feet vertically and six miles horizontally from their targets. On the ground, fifty caliber machine guns, sniper rifles and advanced thermal and night imaging optics allow Airmen an asymmetrical firepower advantage

over most adversaries. Yet a study done by the Center for Army Lessons Learned concluded that, "When two disciplined dismounted infantry units clash, the war becomes a one-on-one fight between soldiers at close range."<sup>20</sup> They analyzed battles from World War II, Korea, Vietnam, Grenada, the Iran/Iraq war and Afghanistan. In each were discovered brutal close-counter engagements that required physical strength, endurance and a knowledge of combatives and bayonet techniques. An example of their conclusions is offered in the story of the Scots Guards assaulting a dug-in Argentine force during the British battle for the Falklands.

The Scots fixed bayonets and proceeded to clear enemy bunkers. A Scots Major came face to face with an Argentine soldier by surprise and found he was out of ammunition; reacting on his training he killed the soldier with his bayonet. The Major later said, "...I believe bayonets kill people and are useful...it certainly saved my life."<sup>21</sup> The authors of the Army study summarized the multiple vignettes with, "Bayonet and hand-to-hand combat training build a spirit of aggressiveness, develop confidence and instill the will to win."<sup>22</sup>

World War II was technological but involved a greater volume of close quarter fighting than any previous conflict. The operations in urban terrain gave more opportunity for this type of engagement than the open field battles of the past 500 years. Current operations in Iraq, Afghanistan and the Horn of Africa show that the United States will continue to fight in these urban battlefields.

**V. Views of the Chief of Staff of the Air Force.** Compared to the Army, Navy and Marine Corps, the Air Force is still struggling for an identity. The other services recount their traditions over centuries while the Air Force recounts decades. It was not until 1995 that the Secretary of the Air Force established the services three core values: Integrity First; Service before Self; and Excellence in All we do. After basic training and the rote memorization that

goes with it, most Airmen do not practice, nor or are they exposed to, any higher application of core value learning. Without reinforced application, the values are meaningless.

The Airman's Creed was published in 2007. Twice the Creed refers to every Airman as a warrior. It also uses the words "guardian," "sword," "shield," "sentry," and, "avenger" in describing who and what an Airman is.<sup>23</sup> The Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force stated that the Creed defined who Airmen were and that it would further establish the warrior ethos in all Airmen.<sup>24</sup>

This begins to paint a picture that the Chief of Staff expects direct combat capability from everyone, regardless of specialty. In 2007 the Chief of Staff of the Air Force, General Michael Mosely, recognized the changing face of the battlefield Airman. In a 2007 memo to all Airmen the Chief of Staff lays out an institutional expectation that every Airman will sacrifice everything to protect his fellow Airman. General Mosely's historical examples showed a personal dedication that extended beyond active duty and into separation/retirement from the service; borrowing from the Marines, he emphasized, "Once an Airman, always an Airman!"<sup>25</sup> In another memo to all Airmen, he titled the subject, "Airmen Warriors." He stated that in his first year as Chief (2005) it was one of his top priorities to instill a warrior ethos in the service.<sup>26</sup> He expressed concern that the Air Force's great technological specialization had diminished the individual Airman's and thus the collective ability of the Air Force to wage personal combat. He expressed his thoughts on personal combat more clearly in a Chief's Scope media release: "On yesterday's battlefields, it was much easier to designate who would and who would not cross into enemy territory and risk being captured. Now nearly any Airman could become isolated and need Survival, Evasion, Resistance and Escape training."<sup>27</sup>



Recently the Air Force extended basic training by seven days and implemented a Warrior Week borrowing heavily from the Marine's basic training "Crucible event."<sup>28</sup> A recurring quote from General Mosely is, "During World War II, more 8<sup>th</sup> Air Force Airmen died in aerial missions over Europe than Marines in all of the conflict."<sup>29</sup> The Chief is trying to inspire the same pride in combat heritage that the Marines have successfully capitalized on by pointing out that historical sacrifices made by Airmen have been as great or greater than the Marines. The Chief also expressed a desire to have all Airmen qualify with a rifle every year, reversing a 60 year history of only those needing to carry weapons daily qualifying. A shortage of sufficient ranges, ammunition and instructors crippled this initiative.

It is clear that the senior leadership of the Air Force wants a change in warrior spirit and capability of the individual Airman both for their individual morale and for their combined force protection.

**VI. Air Force physical fitness.** The source of all combat capability begins with individual aerobic and anaerobic capability. If the individual suffers from reduced performance in these two areas, combat capability will be reduced as well.

Closely related to the other changes the Chief made in the Air Force, are changes in the physical fitness test. Until 2004, all that was expected of the physical prowess of the average Airman was the ability to pedal a bicycle for less than 12 minutes. As most Airman in the preceding 57 years rarely left the comforts of main operating bases and air conditioned/heated work centers, that was probably understandable. In the inter-conflict period between the Vietnam War and Desert Shield, Air Force operations were geared toward the Cold War paradigm of fighting Soviet forces off of well established bases. Since the conclusion of the Cold War and the end of Desert Storm in 1991, the Air Force has closed many of their main

operating bases overseas. The model for the last 17 years has been expeditionary operations from temporary bases in austere conditions.

Today's Airman has to be able to wear 15 pounds of body armor and another 10 pounds of combat related equipment in extreme temperatures outside of forward operating bases, pulling extended work shifts under the daily stress of being shot-at (a greater physical demand and expectation is being placed on them). Accordingly the annual physical fitness test has changed. Gone is the bicycle test; in its place is a 1.5 mile run, push-ups, sit-ups and an abdominal circumference measurement.<sup>30</sup> Below is the chart for males under 25 years of age as an example of the current standards.

**CHART 1**  
**USAF Fitness Standards for Males Under Age 25**

Aerobic Fitness			Body Composition		Push-up		Crunch	
1.5 Mile Run Time (min)	Bike Test (V02)	Points	Ab Circum (inches)	Points	1 Minute (# of Reps)	Points	1 Minute (# of Reps)	Points
<=9:36	>54	50	<32.5	30	>=62	10	>=55	10
9:37-9:48	53	47.5	32.5	28.75	61	9.75	53-54	9.5
9:49-10:12	51-52	45	33	27.5	60	9.5	52	9
10:13-10:36	49-50	43.5	33.5	26.25	59	9.25	50-51	8.75
10:37-11:06	47-48	42	34	25	57-58	9	48-49	8.5
11:07-11:36	45-46	40.5	34.5	23.75	52-56	8.75	46-47	8.25
11:37-12:12	43-44	39	35	22.5	49-51	8.5	44-45	8
12:13-12:54	41-42	37.5	35.5	22.35	45-48	8.25	42-43	7.75
12:55-13:36	39-40	36	36	22.2	41-44	8	40-41	7.5
13:37-14:24	37-38	34	36.5	22.05	37-40	7.75	38-39	7.4
14:25-14:54	36	32	37	21.9	33-36	7.5	36-37	7.3
14:55-15:18	35	30	37.5	21.75	30-32	7.4	35	7.2

15:19-15:48	34	27	38	21.6	27-29	7.3	33-34	7.1
15:49-16:24	33	24	38.5	21.45	24-26	7.2	32	7
16:25-16:54	32	21	39	21.3	21-23	7.1	30-31	6
16:55-17:36	31	18	39.5	21.25	19-20	7	28-29	4
17:37-18:12	30	15	40	21	17-18	6	27	2
18:13-18:54	29	12	40.5	18	15-16	5	<27	0
18:55-19:42	28	9	41	15	14	4		
19:43-20:36	27	6	41.5	12	13-Dec	3		
20:37-21:30	26	3	42	9	11-Oct	2		
>21:30	<26	0	42.5	6	9-Aug	1		
			43	3	<8	0		
			>43.00	0				

Each unit commander is required to provide Airmen 90 minutes, three times a week, of duty time for conducting physical training. Airmen overwhelmingly applauded the change from the bicycle test to the new more rigorous standard with mandatory training sessions. Since the change some Airmen have requested it be taken another step forward and the abdominal measurement be sacrificed for more strenuous aerobic and strength measurements, similar to the Army and Marine Corps.

The new standards are not living up to the expectations set by the Chief of Staff and the Airmen. Some unit commanders are only allowing individual time for training with unit-level training once a week, or in some units, once a month. This training may consist only of flag-football, frisbee, basketball or other team sport where few play, few know how to play and many end up watching (it is very possible that knowledge on how to improve aerobic and anaerobic conditioning is poor at both the unit commander and non-commissioned officer level). The physical training conducted during unit formations has little benefit to the individual, the unit mission or instilling a sense of warrior-ethos or ability. There is little commonality or

standardization across the force in how physical training is conducted. On the Air Force sponsored Squadron Commanders Connection web site the majority of the commanders responding to questions on physical fitness programs agreed that they could not successfully balance shift-work schedules with the Chief of Staff's intent for training.

**VII. Physical confidence and use of force.** Confidence is a characteristic that is more than an emotional manifestation; it is also physical. In a peacekeeping or policing situation it is desired to settle confrontations at the lowest level possible. At the individual troop level it is often personal physical confidence that allows them to be patient enough to resolve situations at the lowest level in a use of force continuum. The Airman who does not have the requisite skills or confidence in his ability to physically control a larger, belligerent foe may resort to the use of batons, riot control agents or deadly force. This may be done out of fear. If that same Airman trains hard physically, he may be more confident in his own strength and endurance. If he receives reliable, fundamental training in physical techniques to manage a larger, belligerent foe he will less likely resolve to escalate the situation with excessive use of force.

The commander of the 99th Security Forces Squadron interviewed 100 new enlistees between 2005-2007. Fewer than 10 had been in a physical fight after the age of 12 and most had no basic, fundamental understanding of personal defense or offense. It is reasonable to assert that these Airmen are more likely to want to use a weapon to enforce compliance with an opponent than to rely on their own physical ability. The implications are improper escalation of force and unnecessary injury to opponent and possible criminal liability.

The most successful Security Forces Airmen in the field are those that have good physical conditioning as they bring a confidence to the job that is readily apparent to the casual observer. Combined with fundamental training in a basic martial combat system, confidence is

multiplied resulting in less use of force incidents. Fear may be confronted if the Airman can recognize it and deal with it; this is a benefit to both themselves and their opponent. Roger Ford expresses this sentiment when he said that the,

“...principle value lies not so much in the actual holds or breaks, but in the psychological reaction which engenders and fosters the necessary attitude of mind which refuses to admit defeat and is determined to achieve victory.”<sup>31</sup>

Additionally the physical confidence gained through training helps support women in the Air Force. Operations DESERT STORM, ENDURING FREEDOM, and IRAQI FREEDOM have greatly blurred the boundaries between the front line and the rear area. This has resulted in large numbers of support personnel engaging in ground combat and led to the last two conflicts having women prisoners of war.<sup>32</sup> The United States is politically cautious of putting women in direct ground combat units. That caution is partly drawn by the fear of women prisoners of war undergoing torture and other atrocities. The reality is that we are putting women in combat operations on the ground even if we are not putting them in direct ground combat units. The Air Force owes them the physical skills, ability and confidence to defend themselves.

For example, Army Private Jessica Lynch and her fellow soldiers were non-infantry soldiers conducting a supply convoy operation when they got lost and came into contact with enemy Iraqi regular army forces. Of the 33 soldiers in the convoy, 11 were killed, nine wounded and seven were captured, including Private Lynch. Private Lynch was separated from the members of her unit. Unarmed and alone she had no training to resist interrogation or physical assault, nor did she know how to mount an unarmed attack to mount an escape. Many of the soldiers did not fire their weapons because they had not properly maintained them and they were unable to operate; they had failed to be taught or to learn the basic routines of defense that makes cleaning your weapon a soldier's first priority. Combat skills training had not been a priority in

support units; they were assumed to be operating in a safe rear area. Aggressive training in combative techniques will give women (and their male counterparts) combatants the edge they need to survive on a battlefield dominated by men.

Confidence allows broader execution of the mission, because Airmen who have been trained, tested, and measured their strengths and weaknesses in individual combat can adapt better in wartime. A former enlisted Airman that had deployed to Afghanistan stated, "If we...had been attacked individually, I don't think anyone would have known what to do. I certainly wasn't trained to fight individually."<sup>33</sup>

**VIII. Reinventing the wheel.** The Army, Marine Corps and the Air Force have developed martial arts programs. The only one that has survived and is currently well developed and mature is the Marine Corps'. The Marines have a program with a permanent Center of Excellence at Quantico, Virginia. The Marines continue to refine the content and capability of their program, and the entire Marine Corps has embraced the effort.

It is suggested the Air Force could easily partner with the Marine Corps to create a Joint Center of Excellence. It would take 16 months to develop martial arts programs at the 85 major Air Force installation world-wide. By creating four mobile training teams of two personnel and providing an initial permanent staff at Quantico of five personnel, the Air Force could have certified instructors at each base. Mobile training teams could visit each installation certifying instructors within each unit in basic techniques. Advanced instructor training would be accomplished at the Joint Center of Excellence on a temporary duty status. Marine Corps instructors could help bridge the gap between basic and advanced instructors until the Air Force program matured. Marine instructors have currently trained Airmen at CONUS, OCONUS and AOR bases through a grassroots, informal support arrangement.

Programs will need to be adopted from the Marines, such as: giving instructors an experience identifier so they can be tracked; using martial arts program rank as a discriminator for below the zone promotion, selection for special jobs, etc; and requiring standardized physical conditioning sessions in-line with the program.

There will be resistance to this effort. The idea that character development is achieved through combative training is difficult for those who have not trained for a lifetime and struggled with the application of that thought. The older programs of Aikido, Judo and Karate have plowed this ground for much longer than the Army, Marine Corps or Air Force combatives programs. Several of the instructors in these disciplines have written numerous texts more of a philosophical, religious, moral theme than of a technical application demonstration.

After a short period of training most Airmen begin to appreciate the damage that they can do to their opponents. If that realization has been tempered with appropriate character development, Airmen will realize what Funakoshi says is true, "...that technical skills and agility quickly pale in comparison to the importance of polishing the heart, mind and character; the very elements that define the quality of our life."<sup>34</sup> It is easy for the casual observer to see the techniques of the martial arts program and appreciate the physical aspects of the art. It is much harder to witness the evolution and execution of the higher mental capability. As such it falls in line with the Japanese principle that, "...the deeper truths of the martial arts are not tied to techniques, tricks and strategies for winning; they are tied to the strategies of life."<sup>35</sup>

The logistics of implementation within the Air Force is easy. The rationale for why it is important for the Air Force is more difficult to understand. The Commandant stated previously that character development was the cornerstone of the program. That is the narrow precipice the Air Force is currently in danger of falling from. While our own Chief of Staff has been quick to

provide survival training, increased small arms qualifications and warrior creeds we are light on the character development. Atrocities like the Abu Ghraib prison scandal show that it is imperative to put self-imposed governors on the behavior of Airmen who will often find themselves far from senior leadership and making decisions that will have strategic effects on the battlefield. The average man can become a lethal destroyer when given an imperative and a leader to drive them, as murderous armies are made from the most unlikely of men.<sup>36</sup>

Conversely commanders who are able to instill justice in the hearts of their men can take quickly formed armies and make them military juggernauts.<sup>37</sup> The Airmen we currently have manning .50 caliber machine guns and the officers leading them have not had the benefit of a career spent learning the ethics of ground combat, nor does the Air Force have programs to provide just in time what the Army and Marine Corps provide over the course of an entire enlistment.

**IX. Conclusion.** Former boxing heavyweight champion Floyd Patterson said, "It's in defeat that a man reveals himself." As leaders we need to provide a way for our subordinates to feel their fears of mortal combat, deal with their failures in a training environment and then rebuild themselves into capable fighters. It is true that small wars have been the international theme for the last 42 years and for the foreseeable future. In fact, 160 wars between 1945-1994 have been fought, taking 22 million lives.<sup>38</sup> Most people can not count more than half a dozen let alone 160 wars. So individual combat, so much part of our past, will continue to be part of our future regardless of the status of technology.

The Chief of Staff of the Air Force and his Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force want Airmen to identify with each other as warriors, across specialties and throughout their careers to retirement. This will take something more in common than the color of their uniform and basic training. It will take a sustained and shared experience challenging them physically, mentally



and morally throughout their careers; an experience that a flight line maintainer can discuss with a finance specialist at the enlisted club and both can equally relate to.

Physical fitness is an expectation our nation has of Airmen. However, they do not expect to come to unit physical training formations and witness intramural basketball or volleyball from our nations "warriors." Nor do they expect to see tape measures being used to measure girth. Most Airmen want to be challenged vigorously in their physical conditioning. Most Airmen want their performance to count more than their appearance.

Physical confidence is the cornerstone to the use of force, just as character discipline is to the Marine Corps Martial Arts Program. Confidence that is imbued through difficult physical training and combatives techniques not only saves lives but purchases good will in foreign countries and the general public, at a price that can not be measured. An Airman's confidence in their ability to do their posted job carries through into other relationships like with their spouse, children, friends, etc.

The idea to implement a martial arts program within the Air Force is not new. Much like the uniform changes over the last two years with physical training gear, battlefield utilities and service uniforms harking back to our heritage, we must hark back to our combat heritage and teach Airmen how to defend themselves and each other. Bring the days of General Curtis LeMay, arguably the last great fighting general in the Air Force, into the 21st century. General LeMay was known for making tough fighting outfits. We can do that again.

Asking if it is relevant is like asking if it is important to teach soldiers how to kill and in so doing knowing how to prevent war crimes. Yes it is relevant to the modern battlefield. The ongoing character development and mental discipline is critical to the 18-24 year old who is still

forming their internal moral code. Having a rigid code that can be discussed with their peers helps them justify why it is right to do the hard thing at the right time instead of the easy thing.

Much like President Theodore Roosevelt's "Man in the Arena" quote, Homer wrote in 800 B.C.E the following about a man questioning his ability to perform in combat:

"The skin of the coward changes color all the time, he can't get a grip on himself, he can't sit still, he squats and rocks, shifting his weight from foot to foot, his heart racing, pounding inside the fellow's ribs, his teeth chattering--he dreads some grisly death. But the skin of the brave soldier never blanches. He's all control. Tense but no great fear. The moment he joins his comrades packed in ambush he prays to wade in carnage, cut-and-thrust at once."<sup>39</sup>

The difference between that coward and the brave soldier is the training they received prior to having entered the battlefield. Killing in close quarters, one on one with your enemy, is a savage thing; too savage for most people. When it is a matter of life and death is not the time to find out your squeamish, because he who hesitates will be lost forever. We must give our Airmen the physical, mental and moral courage to operate on the battlefield.

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## ENDNOTES

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